

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 TRSE-00 AID-05
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O R 260730Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 547
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2888

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: POLITICAL SITUATION - MARCH 26

1. SECURITY SITUATION MORNING MARCH 26 - DAY WHEN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CONVENES - HAS CHANGED LITTLE FROM PREVIOUS DAYS. ISLAMABAD IS QUIET AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING IS HEAVILY GUARDED BY POLICE. REPORTEDLY, ONLY ITEM OF BUSINESS FOR TODAY'S SESSION IS SWEARING IN OF NEW ASSEMBLY MEMBERS. (SCHEDULE FOR NEXT SEVERAL DAYS FOR NA BEING COVERED SEPTEL.)

2. THERE WERE NO MAJOR CONFRONTATIONS IN LAHORE YESTERDAY. IN ADDITION TO A LAWYERS' PROCESSION, THREE OTHER MARCHES WERE TAKEN OUT IN THE CITY. POLICE USED LATHI CHARGES AND TEAR GAS TO BREAK UP ONE PROCESSION AND ABOUT 50 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED; THE REST PROCEEDED SMOOTHLY AND WITHOUT INCIDENT. CONGEN LAHORE
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REPORTS THE CITY IS RELATIVELY PEACEFUL. CONTRARY TO THIS MORNING'S VOA AND BBC REPORTS, THE ARMY IS NOT PATROLING IN LAHORE. IT IS STILL IN BIVOUAC AND RANGERS, FSF AND POLICE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CITY'S SECURITY. AS OF 1000 HOURS ON THE 26 TH, THE HARTAL HAD NOT TAKEN EFFECT, BUSES AND TAXIS WERE RUNNING AND SOME SHOPS WERE OPENING. THE CONGEN REPORTS, HOWEVER, THAT A FINAL JUDGEMENT ON EFFICACY OF HARTAL CANNOT BE MADE

UNTIL LATER TODAY.

3. THERE WERE PROCESSIONS AND DEMONSTRATION IN VARIOUS OTHER PUNJAB CITIES YESTERDAY. THE MOST SERIOUS DISTURBANCES WERE IN MULTAN WHERE THE GOVERNMENT ADMITTED TWO PEOPLE HAD BEEN SHOT AND KILLED. CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS THAT THE ARMY IS NOW ASSISTING THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN KEEPING LAW AND ORDER IN MULTAN. WE UNDERSTAND KARACHI WAS QUIET YESTERDAY WITH ONLY SCATTERED RALLIES AND SPECULATION INTENSIFYING ON OUTCOME OF TODAY'S HARTAL.

4. THE PNA LEADERSHIP RANKS CONTINUE TO BE DECIMATED BY ARRESTS. YESTERDAY TWO PNA MNAS-ELECT FROM MULTAN WERE ARRESTED, AS WAS KHWAJA SADDAR, ACTING LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION IN THE SENATE. ACCORDING TO MARCH 26 NAWA-I-WAQT, THE PRESIDENTS OF 84 DISTRICT AND TEHSIL LEVEL BAR COUNCILS IN THE PUNJAB WERE ALSO ARRESTED YESTERDAY.

5. WITH ITS MAJOR LEADERS INCARCERATED, LEADERSHIP OF THE PNA HAS DEVOLVED TO LESSER KNOWN OPPOSITIONISTS. THE DE FACTO SPOKESMAN FOR THE PNA IS NOW NAWABZADEH NASRULLAH KHAN, LEADER OF THE SMALL PAKISTAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY, NASRULLAH SAID THE PNA WOULD CONTINUE WITH ITS PLANS FOR THE HARTAL AND PROCESSIONS AND DEMONSTRATIONS COUNTRY-WIDE TODAY. JAN AMIR ABBASI, VICE AMIR OF THE JAMAT-I-ISLAAMI AND BHUTTO'S PUTATIVE OPPONENT FOR THE NA SEAT FROM LARKANA IS LOOKING AFTER THE RELIGIOUS PARTIES' INTERESTS ON THE PNA CENTRAL COUNCIL, AND WAZIR ALI, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE TEHRIQ IS STANDING IN FOR THE AIR MARSHAL.

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6. THE VERNACULAR PRESS, ESPECIALLY NAWA-I-WAQT AND JANGT, ARE STILL CARRYING OPPOSITION NEWS, BUT NOT AS MUCH AS JUST BEFORE THE LATEST CRACKDOWN. THE PAKISTAN TIMES CARRIES ONLY GOVERNMENT APPROVED NEWS AND HAS IN THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS STRENGTHENED ITS IMAGE AS A REPOSITORY OF INACCURATE JOURNALISM. MARCH 26 EDITION HAS NUMEROUS FRONT PAGE STORIES ABOUT VARIOUS STUDENT, LEGAL AND LABOR GROUPS SAYING THEY WILL NOT SUPPORT THE HARTAL. ALSO GIVEN FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE IS AN EGREGIOUSLY SYCOPHANTIC STORY BY H.K. BURKI, THE DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT, LAUDING BHUTTO AND VITUPERATIVELY CASTIGATING THE OPPOSITION. MOST DISTURBING LINE, FROM OUR VIEWPOINT, IS COMMENT, WHILE SPEAKING OF THE OPPOSITION, THAT "JUDGING BY THE LEVEL OF ORGANIZATION, SIZE OF THE AGITATION AND THE INEXHAUSTIBLE FUNDS, IT SEEMS THAT THE IMPERIALIST POWERS THAT WERE BEHIND THE INDONESIAN OPERATION (WE ASSUME A REFERENCE TO SUKARNO'S OVERTHROW), ARE BACKING THIS BLOODY ADVENTURE IN PAKISTAN."

7. BY SEPTEL WE ARE COMMENTING FURTHER ON POLITICAL SITUATION.

BYROADE

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